Bristol Bay, Kuskokwim River, and Yukon River (Alaska) Salmon

Date of Declaration/Determination: September, 1998

Location: Bristol Bay, Kuskokwim River, and Yukon River Regions of Alaska

Cause: Due to natural disaster of unknown causes (possibly El Nino effects on water temperature) that resulted in extremely low returns of salmon to the region. Disaster continued from the previous year in Bristol Bay and Kuskokwim areas, and spread to the Yukon region.

Authority: Sec 312(a) of MSA

Appropriation: FY 1999 Appropriation September , 1998-- $50 million

Assistance Provided:
Funds were appropriated to the U.S. Department of Agriculture to address the disaster as follows:

$18 million--emergency assistance to affected families with incomes below the poverty level.

$5 million--transferred to SBA for the cost of direct loans for eligible small businesses under section 7(b) of the Small Business Act.

$15 million--transferred to EDA to make available for community development activities under Title IX of P.L. 91-304.

$5 million--transferred to EDA for use under the Trade Adjustment Assistance Act.

$7 million--transferred to NMFS to award to State of Alaska for research into the causes of the disaster and possible prevention under section 402(d) of the MSA. (Since NMFS portion of the funds was authorized under 402(d), no match was required.)

A grant was awarded to the Alaska Department of Fish and Game entitled, Research and Prevention Relative to the 1998 Bristol Bay, Kuskowim, and Yukon Fishery Disaster. The project consists of 18 sub-projects covering 5 distinct areas impacted by the fishery failure: Alaska Peninsula, Bristol Bay, Kuskokwim River, Yukon River, and Western Alaska (including Bering Sea). It fully supports the State's Western Alaska Salmon Fisheries Disaster Mitigation Research Plan. The grant performance period runs from July 1, 1999 to June 30, 2002.

The proposal described the project as a long-term research program that addresses the responsiveness of the State's harvest management and stock monitoring programs to changes in productivity. It is essentially a fresh-water salmon productivity study that, if successful, will allow the State to better assess fish stocks and forecast abundance. This research will ideally lead to a greater understanding of productivity, which will in turn lead to: restoration of stocks, an ability to anticipate changes to stocks, and the ability to prepare those dependent on salmon resources for changes to those stocks.